

Teachers' Beliefs about Causal Factors, Preventive and Contingent Actions on Bullying. A Descriptive Study

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Abstract

The aim of this study was to carry out a descriptive analysis of the teachers' beliefs about the causal factors, prevention and contingency actions about the bullying phenomenon. The study was carried out in the city of Buenos Aires, with the participation of 316 primary school teachers of the Autonomous City of Buenos Aires of both sexes (22.5% males and 77.5% females), with an age range between 22 and 69 years ($M = 39.38$, $DE = 10.15$). The sample was non-probabilistic, intentional, with proportional affixation to three quotas, according to the sex, age and socioeconomic level of the participants. After collecting the data in the field, a complete descriptive analysis of thirty items was carried out. Then a descriptive analysis of 15 final items. Finally, an analysis of the relationships between the dimensions of the scale and an analysis of the differences in the three dimensions according to the sex, age and years of experience of teachers. It is generally concluded that teachers do not believe that families of separated parents, large families or assembled families are the causal factors of harassment, teachers do not believe that competitiveness in the sports area has to do with harassment, teachers believe that parents are the most important factor in preventive actions, teachers believe that punitive actions against discrimination can be useful and finally, teachers do not believe that the change of school solves the problem of harassment

Keywords: Bullying, teacher's beliefs, casual factors, preventive actions, contingent actions

Introduction

The present research is a joint study between the University of Flores and the Ombudsman's Office of the City of Buenos Aires, whose purpose is to describe the teachers' beliefs regarding the causal, preventive and contingent factors in relation to Bullying. The most important aim is to promote effective strategies against harassment.

Aims

The first aim of this study was to carry out a descriptive analysis of the teachers' beliefs about the causal factors, prevention and contingency actions about the Bullying phenomenon.

The second aim is to analyze the relationships between the three types of beliefs mentioned according to the age, sex and teaching experience of the participants

Theoretical framework

Bullying is defined as a protracted behavior of verbal abuse, social rejection, psychological intimidation and / or physical abuse of a child (or children) to one who becomes a victim. Bullying is persistent, and it can last for weeks, months and years. It is a systemic phenomenon, because it occurs in a group that also involves intimidators, harassed, uninvolved people, witnesses, teachers, administrators and families (Olweus, 1978, 1998)

According to Cerezo (1998), "sustained violence, mental or physical, guided by an individual or a group directed against another who is not able to defend himself in that situation, in the school environment." Subsequently, it adds the intentionality, the goal of harm and a dynamic of exclusion, violence and deterioration of the socialization, of a student or group of students, to another partner whom he becomes his habitual victim.

On the other hand, according to Creswell (2009) and Mettens (1997), from a phenomenological point of view, individuals through their interactions with objects, events and persons construct beliefs that influence the way they experience and act within their contexts. Thus, beliefs are considered as fundamental cognitions that affect the processes of planning, classroom management, teaching and evaluation performed by teachers. Beliefs are defined as: Ideas - generalizations - to interpret reality, based on references such as: personal experiences, information of other people, imagination, deductions.

The way that teachers perceive students and their behavior is related to the strategies they use to manage their classrooms (Valdez Cuervo Estévez, Nenninger et al, 2013)

It is therefore imperative to design prevention programs to change the way teachers perceive and proceed with respect to the phenomenon of bullying.

Method

The research design consists of two stages. The first of an instrumental type (Montero & León, 2007), in which the construction and validation of the scale of beliefs of the teachers on the causal factors, preventive actions and contingents actions of the bullying were carried out. And a second stage of unique group ex post facto.

The study was carried out in the city of Buenos Aires, with the participation of 316 adults of both sexes (22.5% males and 77.5% females), aged between 22 and 69 years ($M = 39.38$, $DE = 10.15$). The sample was non-probabilistic, intentional, with proportional affixation to three quotas, according to the sex, age and socioeconomic level of the participants.

Assessment Tool

Inventory of Bullying: 90 statements, reduced to 30 and then to 15.
15 final statements:

Causal Factors

2. Students with divorced parents are more prone to bullying
5. Students with blended families are more prone to bullying
8. Competitive students in sports activities are more prone to bullying
11. Students who harass at school come from a large family
14. Bullying is due to the lack of values transmitted from the preschool

Preventive actions factor

3. Bullying could be prevented if more funds were invested for social assistance from the State
6. The society must make an exemplary punishment against discrimination
9. The school should separate the undisciplined students to avoid the bullying
12. At the first expression of discrimination there must be punitive actions on the bully.
15. It is up to parents to take preventive actions

Contingent actions factor

1. Students who have lived violent situations or jokes should be relocated to a different area in schools to prevent further incidents

- 4. Bullies should be expelled from School
- 7. Children must solve their own problems
- 10. Parents should be punished by the law for their children's bullying acts
- 13. It is necessary to find another school for the harassed in order to start again

Answers: 1. Totally agree, 2. Agree somewhat, 3. Neither agree nor disagree, 4. Disagree somewhat, 5. Strongly Disagree

Finally, an analysis of the relationships between the dimensions of the scale and an analysis of the differences in the three dimensions according to the sex, age and years of experience of teachers.

Results, Discussion and Conclusions

Study of teaching beliefs about causal factors

Although teachers do not believe that families of separated parents, assembled families or numerous families (statements number 2, 5 and 11) are significant as causal factors, a large number of studies refute this (Rojas Marco, 1995, Dracic, 2009), It is generally considered that in these types of families, a dynamic that induces dysfunctionality is usually more habitual and can therefore be established as a causal factor.

With respect to the causal factor that expresses that competitive students in sports activity are more prone to harassment (Statement number 8), teachers find some disagreement; bibliography in general contributes with other perspectives. In different studies it is mentioned that Bullying is installed and sustained in the context of individualistic and competitive relationships, such as those that can happen in the sports competition (Yau, Schluchter, Taylor, Margevicius, Forrest, Andreias, ... & Hack , 2013).

Teachers disagree somewhat that the harassment of peers is due to the lack of values transmitted from preschool (Statement number 14). The bibliography is expressed in another sense (Chillón, 1996). Approaches that aim to generate resources and promote norms of healthy coexistence in this stage have been more successful.

Study of teaching beliefs about preventive actions

As regards the assertion that Bullying could be prevented if more funds were invested for social assistance from the State (Statement number 3), teachers find neither agreement nor disagreement. However a subsidized program does not guarantee success. There are some programs that have succeeded like the Olweus method, cataloged as a program -Blueprint- in the United States, the Sheffield Project, -The Seville Anti-School Violence Project- (SAVE), and the "Andalucía Anti-School Violence Project"; In addition the "Program Zero", of Norwegian origin used successfully in the United States and Chile; And the KiVa Method developed by researchers at

the University of Turku for public schools in Finland during 2007 and 2008, based on a series of tools for teachers, lessons for students, virtual instruction material, and guidelines for the school institution in order to stop the harassment events.

With regard to punitive actions against discrimination, as a preventive action (statements number 6 and 12) teachers neither agree nor disagree. In general, these programs focus on taking action where punishment is not considered a useful tool. These approaches place in the aggressors the problem, only one of the actors, with the resulting culpability, without realizing a systemic look (Martinez, 2003). They do not take into account the system and dynamics of their actors.

With regard to isolating undisciplined students as a preventive action (Statement number 9), teachers somewhat agree. This is inaccurate in this context since instead of cementing behaviors of positive coexistence they focus on discarding the negative, not facilitating future well-being. Isolating "problematic" students creates a stigmatizing attitude. "Health is a state of complete physical, mental and social well-being, not just the absence of disease or illness" (WHO, 1948).

On the other hand, as regards the item of holding parents responsible for taking preventive actions (Statement number 15), the teachers are somewhat in agreement. It should be noted that once again it attributes externally both the cause and the prevention, contrary to what is observed in most studies. It is suggested for families, teachers and other actors to work as a team and to get involved in solving the problem and ecological prevention programs, a model focused mainly on the feelings of the people, and the integrated work of all groups, have been more effective (Ortega, 2008).

Study of teacher beliefs about contingent actions

As regards the assertion that bullies should be relocated or expelled from school (statements number 1 and 4), the teachers disagree, and this agrees with the bibliography. The potential solution is not such, because it tends to repeat the role in other systems. The aggressor maintains his role within the same domain, where the dynamics continues (Chancha Ayala, Solano & Damasco, 2015).

As regards the assertion that students should solve the problems between themselves (statement number 7), teachers somewhat disagree. There is also a difference in power between harasser and harassed (Harwood and Copfer, 2011, Naylor et al., 2006), which is repeated when they try to solve each other because they do not have the tools to solve a situation that is systemic.

Finally, the teachers somewhat agree with the claim that the law would have to pen the parents of the perpetrators (statement number 10).

Liability laws minimize the complex relationship between delinquency and paternity (Raymond, 2005).

Relationships between scale dimensions

There is a co-dependence between the three dimensions of teachers' beliefs about Bullying. It has been emphasized that beliefs about causes are associated with the type of preventive and contingent measures. Therefore, the provision of preventive or contingent actions without knowing the causes of the phenomenon is excessively mechanical and knowing the causal factors will increase the motivation of the teachers

Differences in the three dimensions according to gender, age and years of experience of Teachers:

- The women have obtained higher scores, that is to say, they disagree with respect to the preventive actions.
- No differences were found according to sex with Causes and Contingent actions.
- In relation to age, older teachers have higher scores in the dimension causal factor (they disagree)
- In relation to the years of experience, those who have more experience are those who are more in agreement with the contingent actions of the questionnaire, although the teachers in general are somewhat in disagreement. Previous studies do not generally agree with these assertions. It is possible that these teachers do not take into account the systemic dimension of the phenomenon and work on isolated factors.

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